# Higher Degree by Research Candidates Policy - Academic Communication

## Section 1 - Scope

(1) This Policy applies to all Higher Degree by Research candidates (hereafter referred to as HDR candidates) and supervisory teams of Charles Sturt University (the University).

## Section 2 - Glossary

(2) For the purpose of this Policy:

a. HDR Candidates - means students who are enrolled in a higher degree by research program at the University (i.e.: PhD, PhD by publication, Research Professional Doctorate and Master by Research).

b. Supervisory teams - means a team of supervisors, appointed by the Research Committee, made up of the following:

    i. a Principal Supervisor;

    ii. one or more Co-supervisors, normally one of whom is on the supervisor's Register;

    iii. one member of the supervisory team should be a member of the academic staff of the University(refer to the Higher Degree by Research Policy - Supervision).

c. Communication Plan - a documented agreement between a HDR candidate and his/her supervisory team that establishes common understandings and expectations of how and when communication will occur during the candidature. The Plan is reviewed regularly throughout candidature.

## Section 3 - Objective

(3) The objective of this Policy is to facilitate effective and timely communication and consultation between HDR candidates and supervisory teams in support of student learning and the student experience. This Policy also acknowledges and contributes to the expectation of mutually responsive and respectful communication. It is predicated on the requirement that on admission to Charles Sturt University (the University) all students shall have access to an Internet connected computer capable of communication with the University's online systems (refer to the Admissions Procedure).

(4) This Policy acknowledges the diversity of HDR candidates. It is framed to reflect the learning, teaching and research that occurs both in the online learning environment (OLE) as well as through face-to-face engagement.

(5) This Policy seeks to achieve its objective by:

a. ensuring that HDR candidates have access to supervisory teams for information, advice and support and are adequately informed of approved staff absences and procedures for obtaining advice during periods of staff absences (refer also to the Higher Degree by Research Policy - Supervision);

b. advocating the development of communication plans agreed to by HDR candidates and supervisory teams early

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in the candidature;

c. ensuring that HDR candidates receive timely and quality feedback in their communications with supervisory teams; and

d. establishing procedures that foster collegiality, mutual respect and co-operation in the communication between HDR candidates and supervisory teams.

# Section 4 - Establishment of a Communication Plan

(6) During the first six weeks of candidature, HDR candidates and supervisory teams should negotiate, develop and document an agreed Communication Plan to establish common understanding and expectations of how and when communication will occur. It is also recognised that the Communication Plan will necessarily require review at stages throughout candidature.

(7) The development of the documented Communication Plan would normally include consideration of the following points:

a. agreed roles and responsibilities for the HDR candidate and all members of a supervisory team;

b. agreed channels of communication (including via information and communications technologies and face-to-face) and arrangements for the maintenance of up-to-date contact details;

c. agreed frequency of meetings (which may include remote and/or face-to-face meetings);

d. clarification about who to include in different forms of communication;

e. agreed timelines for feedback and for responses to communication both by the candidate and supervisory team;

f. agreed processes by which the HDR candidate and supervisory team will inform one another of any extended absences/leave and alternative arrangements that may be required during those periods; and

g. agreed timeline for the next review of the Communication Plan.

# Section 5 - Communication with HDR Candidates in Isolated Locations

(8) University admission requires all students to have access to an Internet connected computer capable of communicating with the University online systems (refer to the Admission Policy).

(9) Notwithstanding this requirement, if for some reason a HDR candidate is unable to communicate with the University online systems (for example because they are an inmate of a correctional facility or reside at an isolated geographical location) then a Communication Plan shall be developed and shall specifically take into account the circumstances of the candidate.

# Section 6 - Mutual Respect Between HDR Candidates and Supervisory Teams

(10) HDR candidates and supervisory teams should communicate in a professional and collegial manner that is honest and timely. In accordance with the Communicating Without Bias Guidelines they should take care to use non-discriminatory language that avoids reference to a person's gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, marital status, age, physical characteristics, level of ability, religion or class unless such information is relevant to the learning activity or discussion. The tone of communication between HDR candidates and supervisory teams should be mutually

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respectful.

# Section 7 - Complaints Under this Policy

(11) Complaints under this Policy should be dealt with at the Faculty level by the relevant Sub-Dean/Associate Deans Graduate Studies in accordance with the provisions of the Complaints Management Policy, thereby facilitating a prompt and mutually agreed resolution of alleged breaches.

(12) HDR candidates shall be advised in the HDR Information Guide of their right to lodge a complaint. HDR candidates shall be advised that in the first instance they should contact the Sub-Dean/Associate Deans Graduate Studies in their Faculty of enrolment outlining the issue and any concerns.

(13) If, after following the steps set out in this Policy for contacting supervisory teams, HDR candidates believe that appropriate communication standards have not been observed, they should refer to the Higher Degree by Research Complaints Procedure, clauses on Concerns, Complaints, Grievances and Appeals.

(14) If a member(s) of a supervisory team is experiencing unreasonable demands under this Policy he/she/they should, in the first instance, contact the Sub-Dean/Associate Deans Graduate Studies outlining the issue and any concerns.

## Status and Details

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